

## **BHAVAN'S LIBRARY**

This book is valuable and  
NOT to be ISSUED  
out of the Library  
without Special Permission

# SANKVRACHARYA

(HIS LIFE AND TEACHINGS IN TRANSLATION OF ATMA-BODHA).

SECOND EDITION.

— O —

BY

SITA NATH DATTA,

*Annotator of Upanishadas*

Salva  
DAT

PUBLISHED BY

THE SOCIETY FOR THE RESUSCITATION  
OF INDIAN LITERATURE.

— O —

CALCUTTA.

PRINTED BY H. C. DESS, ELYSIUM PRESS,  
65½, Beadon Street.

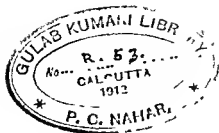
—  
1898.

## **BHAVAN'S LIBRARY**

This book is valuable and  
**NOT** to be ISSUED  
out of the Library  
without Special Permission

LIBRARY  
S. N. 3.27  
PUBLISHER'S NOTE.

This little treatise contains an account of the life and teachings of the great religious teacher of India, Sankaracharya, whose commentaries on Vedanta works are still resorted to with zeal and eagerness by oriental scholars. It is not possible for every one to go through all his writings for forming an idea of his splendid teachings. The following pages, from the pen of one whose name is well known for his profound scholarship and philosophical attainments, are likely to give a comprehensive and clear idea of the views of that great theologian. The translation of Sankara's great work Atma-bodha, by a great European Orientalist, is likely to give an idea of his views on Vedanta. Professor Wilson's note on Sankara's age will place before our readers all the researches carried on by great scholars on this most difficult problem.



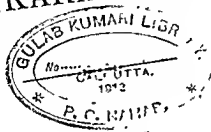
## CONTENTS.

---

SUBJECT.	PAGE.
His Life ...	1
His Teachings ...	9
Atma-Bodha ...	49
A note on Sankara's age ...	63



# SANKARACHARYA.



HIS LIFE.

## I.

ACCORDING to the account which to us appears most reliable, Sankarāchārya was born in the year 3889 of the Kali Era, corresponding to 799 A. D. Two places in the Decan,—one, a village named Chidamvara, in Kerala, and another in Malabar,—claim to be the birth place of the great preacher. It seems probable that he was born in the one, and his family removed to the other while he was yet a child. Sankarāchārya's father belonged to a class of Brahmanas called Namburi, and a member of this honoured

class has been, up to this time, performing the priestly functions of the Jyosi Matha in Kashmir, ever since Sankara's time, in accordance, perhaps, with a rule established by himself or one of his immediate followers. Sankara's father was Visvajit, *alias* Sivaguru, and his mother Visishtā. The pious couple seem to have got their illustrious child when they were very old, and this circumstance seems to have been taken advantage of by his castemen—at what period of Sankara's life it is difficult to say—to spread a rumour as to his being a natural child. Sankara's father died when he was about twelve, and no difficulty seems to have been experienced on the solemn occasion of his funeral and requiem ceremonies on account of any suspicion on the part of his castemen. But very different was the case when, long after, this, the pious Visishtā followed her husband to the other world. It is stated that the lady having been excommunicated by her castemen for giving birth to an illegitimate child, they did not come to his assistance in performing her funeral ceremony,

and the forsaken son had to do it alone. This seems to indicate that the story of Sankara's illegitimacy was an invention, that it was concocted after Visvajit's death, and at a time when Sankara had already achieved his wide-spread fame. Whether it is to be credited to his enemies or his friends and admirers, it is scarcely possible to ascertain. His reforming zeal and controversial warfare must have very early brought him in contact with many who were jealous of his intellectual superiority, and indignant at the demolition of their theological systems at his hands; these, taking advantage of his having been the child of his parents' old age, may probably have attempted to make him an object of general contempt by throwing doubts on his legitimacy. On the other hand, it is not unlikely that his followers, like those of Jesus Christ, invented the story of his having been born without a human father, in order to establish his divinity on a miraculous basis. It is said that the god Siva, whose image used to be worshipped in Chidambara, entered the womb of Visishtā



one day in the presence of a large number of worshippers in response to her and her husband's earnest prayers and long practised penances. This story of the miraculous birth of their great opponent could not, of course, be received with credence by his enemies, it could only be interpreted in the light in which they seem to have interpreted it. Be that it may, the childhood and education of Sankara were what could be naturally expected of one whose writings continue to be deeply admired and appreciated by the most thoughtful of our 'race, both here and in the remote West, after the lapse of ten long centuries. He went through the *Upanayan* (presentation before a preceptor) ceremony at eight, according to the rules of his caste, but he is said to have mastered some of the *Sastras* even before that age. This and other marvellous anecdotes connected with the great Theologian's intellectual history will not appear incredible to any one who has gone through the *Autobiography of John Stuart Mill*. The present writer has personal experience of a boy who had, at eight, gone

through the *Rāmāyānā*, the *Mahābhārata*, and one or two of the Purānas and who discussed theological problems with a wonderful earnestness Sankara is said to have finished his education at sixteen, and become a Sannyāsi shortly after. His mother, who was naturally opposed to his betaking to a hermit's life, is said to have given her consent to it under peculiar circumstances. Once, when Sankara was returning home with his mother from a relative's place, he had to cross a river of which the water was fordable when they began to cross it. But all on a sudden, when they were in the middle of the stream, the water began to increase. Sankara seized this opportunity of extorting his mother's consent to his becoming a Sannyāsi. He told the terrified lady that if she gave her consent, he would pray to God for their deliverance, if not, both would be drowned by the swelling flood. The lady yielded, and Sankara, after carrying her safely on his shoulders to the other side, took leave of her and entered the monastic order.

The work, which Sankara chose as the one

great object of his labours, was the revival of the system of religion taught in the gnostic portions of the *Vedas*, namely, the *Upanishads* or *Vedantas* and systematised in the aphorisms variously called *Vedanta Sūtras*, *Sarīraka Sūtras*, *Uttara Mīmāṃsā* &c. He selected eleven of the principal *Upanishads* almost the only ones that can be called genuine,—for commentary. He also wrote a commentary—the greatest of those written by him—on the *Vedanta Sūtras*, and another on the *Bhagavadgītā* a work which, even in his time was held in universal veneration by *Hindus*, and which contains a somewhat popular exposition of the religion of the *Upanishads*. He also wrote a number of original works in exposition of his views. Of the large number of books ascribed to him, it is difficult to ascertain which are directly from his pen and which owe their origin to him only indirectly,—having been written by his followers under the inspiration of his teachings. Besides writing Śaṅkara very largely resorted to oral lecturing and controversy as means of disse

minating his views. From the places mentioned as visited by him, it appears that this energetic missionary traversed the whole of the Indian continent. He travelled as far as Kamrup, i. e. Assam, in the north east, and Kashmir and Kalkh in the north west, and thus went not only through the whole breadth of the country, but also beyond its present limits. Its whole length also, from the Hima layas to Cape Comorin, was done by this indefatigable worker. In the course of his missionary peregrinations, he came in contact with philosophical and theological opponents of various creeds and classes, and made converts among all. His greatest opponents seem to have been the Buddhists who were opposed to all forms of Vedic religion. It was through the exertions of Sankarāchārya and his followers that the already waning influence of Buddhism in the country was finally destroyed. Of all the converts that Sankara gained, the greatest seem to have been Mandana Misra, afterwards named Suresvara, and his gifted wife, Ubhaya Bhārati. This remarkable lady was, it is stated, deeply read in

the Vedas, with all the branches of knowledge auxiliary to their study, in all the six schools of philosophy, as well as in poetry and drama. It is said that when Sankara declared his intention to have a controversy with Mandana Ubhay Bhārati was chosen the umpire. But when, in the course of the long disputation, she found her learned husband giving way, she took his side with Sankara's permission, and kept his opponent at bay for a long while. At the end both husband and wife were defeated by the great controversialist and became his disciples. The other principal followers of Sankara were Padmapāda Hastāmālaka and Totaka. Of these Padmapāda had two disciples, Tirtha and Asrama, Hastāmālaka two, Vana and Aranya. Mandana three, Giri, Parvati and Sīgara, and Totaka three, Sarasvati, Bhārati and Puri. These names are of course titles conferred on the disciples on their entering the order. The ten well known sections of the order of Sanyāsis, established by Sankara, derive their names from these leaders of the school. Of the many mathas or colleges of the school,

four seem to have been established by the illustrious founder himself. They are the Srīngagiri Matha on the Srīngeri hills, the Sārādā Matha at Dwarka, the Govardhana Matha at Puri, and the Iyosī Matha on the Himalayas (Badarikāśrama).

All this vast and fruitful work, which has had, and continues to have, after the lapse of one thousand years, the deepest influence on the religious life of the country, was done by one who, at the close of his wonderful career, had not yet passed his youth, for Sankara died in A. D. 830, at the early age of 32, at Kadar on the Himalayas.

— o —

## HIS TEACHINGS

### II

In the following sketch of the teachings of Sankarāchārya, I shall confine myself to the following of his works — His three great commentaries, namely those on the *Upanishads*, the *Vedānta Sūtras* and the *Bhagavadgītā* and the beautiful treatise entitled *Vivekachūḍāmaṇi*. I shall state Sankara's

views as set forth in these writings, under certain heads

I *The sources of Knowledge*—Sankara's view of the sources of knowledge is identical with those of other orthodox Indian philosophers. They are Perception, Inference and Revelation. According to him, God is known by Revelation alone. This statement, however, is likely to generate, in minds trained under purely western methods, the idea that, according to Sankara, God cannot be directly known by the human soul,—that he is revealed only to chosen souls through a supernatural process. But Sankara's idea of Revelation is very different from such an idea. According to him, words, of which human language is composed, have a double nature. Outwardly, they are mere sound, perishing and evanescent, but inwardly, they are ideas, conceptions, and all conceptions are above time. They exist eternally in the Divine mind, and it is only their appearance or reproduction in created minds, that depends on time. The Vedas, the visible or audible form of Revelation, are nothing but

a repository of these eternal conceptions, and hence they cannot be said to have any author, [See Commentary on the *Vedānta Sūtras* I 3 26—33] They are *apaurusheya*, not proceeding from any person. The conception of an Infinite Mind was revealed to the *Rishis* and embodied in the Vedas, and when the Vedas are studied by a properly qualified person, they help in revealing to him the same great conception. Sankara recognizes the existence, in every created mind, of a primary belief in God. But he thinks that in souls undisciplined by moral and spiritual exercises, and unenlightened by the Vedas, this primary belief exists in an impure form, and that it is only through such exercises and through the thoughtful study of the Vedas, that this belief rises into direct knowledge, and becomes the means of salvation or liberation. This is Sankara's idea of Revelation when he writes as a philosopher. In this sense, Revelation is indistinguishable from Reason or Intuition. But Sankara is not merely a philosopher, but a scholiast and controversialist also, and in his controversies



salvation or liberation. The six spiritual possessions comprehended under the third discipline are *sama*, the control of the outward senses; *dama*, the control of the inner sense; *titikshā*, patience under suffering; *uparati*, quietness of mind; *śraddhā*, faith in Revelation and spiritual preceptors; and *samādhi*, concentration of the mind on things spiritual. The fervent worship of God according to prescribed methods like the *Sāṅdilyarīdyā* of the *Chhāndogya Upanishad*, comes under the last mentioned discipline, *samādhi*. Sankara, unlike some of his later followers, is a great advocate of *bhakti*, the reverential love of God, and never misses an opportunity of emphasising its great importance. According to him, it is the highest means of attaining salvation,

*Mokshakāranasamgrahāṁ bhaktire' a gariyasi*  
(*Vivekachudāmani*, 32)

It would be a mistake to suppose, as some do, that, according to Sankara, the study of Theology, the attempt to attain an intellectual knowledge of God,—should be postponed till success has been achieved in purely ethical

and devotional discipline. It is clear that if this had been his idea, he would not have mentioned *nityanityavastu vicar*, the discrimination of the phenomenal and the real, as one, in fact the first, of the four great disciplines. He must have seen that unless one had at least some imperfect knowledge of God, as the only absolutely true Thing, the only thing worth seeking after, one would not be induced to go through the other exercises prescribed with a view to the attainment of that great end. His idea seems to be that the study of Theology should not be made a merely intellectual exercise, divorced from ethical and devotion culture, and that the highest knowledge—insight into the true nature of the Godhead—which is really the result of long and deep spiritual experience, should not be and in fact cannot be, communicated to impure, restless, irreverent and worldly minds.

4 *Sankara's Idealism*—Sankara is, as a close follower of the *Upanishades* cannot but be, an Idealist. Being monistic, his Idealism is more like the Idealism of Hegel than that

of Berkeley, but as he has nowhere laid down a precise theory of knowledge, and deduced his Idealism and Monism from it, it is not possible to ascertain to what species, according to Western modes of classification, his Idealism belongs. Besides, notwithstanding Sankara's great philosophical acuteness, it becomes sometimes difficult, in reading his writings, to resist the thought that his Idealism is more the result of a reverential acceptance of the teachings of the *Upanishadas*, and of spiritual insight proceeding from devotional exercises, than the logical outcome of a consistently thought-out system of Metaphysics. This impression forces itself specially in reading his refutation of Buddhist Idealism, where if he does not actually contradict himself, he, at any rate, speaks very unguardedly of Idealism, and where one naturally expects that, in criticising the Subjective Idealism of his opponents, he should not forget that he also is an Idealist, and that while emphasising his divergence from their views, he should, at the same time, show where he is at one with them. That things have no independent existence,

but rest constantly on the Divine thought is a conception which one meets with almost at every turn in Sankara's writings. In the *Vivekachudāmanī* this conception is expressed in language which reads very much like the language of Subjective Idealism. There Sankara says —

स्वप्नेऽयं शून्ये सृजति स्वगतया  
 भोक्तादि विम्बं मन एव सर्वम् ।  
 तयस्य जायत्यपि न विरोधः  
 तत्सर्वमेतत् तन्मनसो विद्मः शम् ॥  
 सुषुप्तिकाले मग्नसि प्राणीने  
 न किञ्चिदस्ति सकलप्रसिद्धे ।  
 अतो मनः कल्पित एव पुनः  
 संसार एतस्य न यस्तुतोऽस्ति ॥

*Vivekachudāmanī* 172 173

'In dream which is devoid of any substantial reality the *sensorium* itself sends out (creates), through its power, all objects including the recipient of feelings (i.e. the individual soul) and the rest. So it is in the waking state also there is no difference all this is

the manifestation of the sensorium. All know that in dreamless sleep, when the sensorium is merged, nothing remains. Hence the conditioned state of the soul is created by the sensorium and does not exist in reality." But we do not forget that, according to Sankara, when the individual soul sleeps, and the world does not exist for it, Brāhmā, the world-soul, wakes, and the world exists for him, and even when he also falls asleep at the end of each cycle, the Over-soul, the soul of Brāmā himself, "he who knows all that takes place in the states of waking, dream and dreamless sleep,"—

*Yo vijānāti sakalam jāgrat svapna  
śshuptishu—*

wakes, and the world exists as the object of his eternal knowledge. As Sankara says in his exposition of the 5th Vedānta Sūtra, which deals with the knowledge of God :—

कर्मापेक्षायान्तु ब्रह्मण ईचिद्वत्त्वंयुतयः सुतरा-  
मुपपन्नाः । किं पुनस्तत् कर्म यत्प्रशान्तत्पत्ते-  
रीश्वरज्ञानस्य विषयो भवतीति ? तच्चान्यत्वाभ्याम

निर्व्यञ्चनीये नामरूपे अव्याकृते व्याचिकीर्षिते इति  
 ब्रूमः । यत्प्रसादादि योगिनामप्यतोतानागत विषयं  
 प्रत्यक्षं ज्ञानमिच्छन्ति योगशास्त्रविदः किमुवक्तव्यं  
 तस्य नित्यसिद्धेश्वरस्य सृष्टिस्थिति संज्ञतिविषयं  
 नित्यज्ञानं भवतीति ।

"If, however, an object is supposed to be required (for Brahman being intelligent), the texts ascribing thought to Brahman will be found to be demonstrated all the better. When then is that which is the object of the Lord's knowledge previously to the origin of the world? Name and form, we reply, which can be defined neither as identical with him nor as different from him unevolved, but about to be evolved. The adherents of the Yoga Sastras say that the yogins have a direct knowledge of the past and the future through his favour; there can be no question, then, as to the fact, that the eternally perfect Lord has an eternal knowledge of creation, existence, and dissolution." But the same Sankara, who everywhere insists on the dependance of matter on mind, and to whom, as we have

seen in the first of the above extracts, waking and dreaming are nearly identical, seems to forget himself partly in expounding Sūtras 28—32 of Pada I, Chapter II of the *Vedānta Sūtras*, and insists not only on the difference between waking and dreaming, which is quite evident, but on the externality of objects to knowledge, and writes, after the manner of the Scotch Reid, as the popular belief in the externality of objects should be uncritically received as final—as if their externality meant not merely externality to one another, but also externality to knowledge itself. However, Sankara's self contradiction in the passage referred to may be apparent rather than real. The point, he means to emphasise, may be, not the absolute independence of objects, but their independence of the perishing perceptions that constitute the mental life of individual souls.

5 *The Grounds of Theism*—The grounds of Sankara's Theism are laid on the distinction of subject and object. As I have already said, Sankara recognises the existence of a primary and universal be'ief in the existence

of God This belief is, according to him, no other than our belief in self,—*asmatpratyaya* or *âtmapratyaya* Every one believes that he is not the objects which he knows, that he is knowing, while they are known, that he is self revealed, and therefore independent, while they are revealed by the self and are therefore dependent, that he is one and indivisible, while they are many But this distinction of subject and object gives us, it may be urged, only a plurality of finite and mutually exclusive individual souls and not the Universal Soul, the Soul of all finite souls, and the Cause and Support of the universe Sankara does not think so He thinks that when such an objection is raised it only shows that the final discrimination of subject and object has not been made,—the real subject has not been caught hold of The finite individual thing, which is commonly taken as the subject, is only an aggregate of perceptions subsumed under the notion of individuality, and as much an object as other objects It is not the real, ultimate self, for it is not self revealed It is



revealed by the self revealed Self, which therefore is the ultimate and absolute Reality [See Sankara's exposition of the 4th *Vedānta Sūtra*] This method of indicating the Universal mind is identical with that of the British Hegelians, who say that Reason is universal and absolute, and not individual, because individuality itself is, like other objects, relative to Reason. That to which individuality itself is relative, that which sees the limits of and therefore transcends individuality, cannot itself be individual. To illustrate the truth that the Self, though apparently limited and plural, is really infinite and indivisible, Sankara compares it to space, which seems limited by material adjuncts for example in a jar, but is really infinite. The space inside the jar seems different from that which lies outside it, but it is, in reality, the same space that is within and without it. The limits of the jar are not the limits of space, because they, being themselves in space cannot limit it. In the same manner, objects and their limitations are all relative to the Self, and therefore cannot limit it.

The Self seems to be limited and plural only when it is ignorantly identified with an aggregate of objects gross or fine, material or mental, but when it is considered in its true character, as the self-revealed subject to which all objects are relative, it is seen to be one indivisible infinite without a second.

6 *The idea of God*—Sankara's idea of God is, then, that of an infinite, all-knowing, all-comprehending Soul, the Soul of all finite beings and the Support of the objective world. I shall here quote a passage from the *Vivekachuddamani* in which he gives us his idea of God in a somewhat full form —

अयं सप्रवक्ष्यामि स्वरूपं परमात्मनः ।  
यदिज्ञाय नरो बन्धान्मुक्तं कैवल्यमनुते ॥  
अस्ति कश्चित् स्वयं नित्यमहप्रत्ययलम्बनः ।  
अवस्थात्रयसाक्षी सन् पञ्चकोपविलक्षणः ॥  
यो विजानाति सकलं जायतुस्तत्प्रसुप्तिषु ॥  
बुद्धितद्वृत्तिसङ्गावमभावमहमित्ययम् ॥  
यं पश्यति स्वयं सर्वं यं न पश्यति कथनं ।  
यद्येत्यति बुक्त्यादि यं न चेतयत्ययम् ॥

येन विश्वमिदं व्याप्तं यं न व्याप्नोति कश्चन ।  
 आभारूपमिदं सर्वं यं भान्तमनुभात्ययम् ॥  
 यस्य सन्निधिमात्रेण देहेन्द्रियमनोधियः ।  
 विषयेषु स्वकोयेषु वर्तन्ते प्रेरिता इव ॥  
 अहङ्कारादि देहाग्रा विषयाश्च सुखादयः ।  
 वेद्यन्ते घटवद्वयेन नित्यबोध स्वरूपिणा ॥  
 एषोऽन्तरात्मापुरुषः पुराणो निरन्तराखण्ड  
 सुखानुभूतिः ।

सदैकरूपः प्रतिबोधमात्रो येनैषिता

वागसवच्चरन्ति ॥

*Vivekachudāmanī*, 126—133

"I shall now tell you of the nature of the Supreme Spirit, by knowing which man is freed from bondage, and obtains *kaivalya* (i.e., detachment from Nature). There is a self subsisting Being in constant relation to our belief in self, who is the witness of the three states (of waking, dreaming, and dreamless sleep) and distinct from the five sheaths (the corporeal, vital, sensorial, conceptual and emotional). He who knows all in

waking, dreaming and dreamless sleep, knows the intellect and its modifications, knows entity and nonentity, and knows himself as "I," he who sees all, but whom no one sees, who vitalizes the intellect and other things, but whom these things do not vitalize, he by whom this world is pervaded, but who is not pervaded by anything he, the shining One, by whose light all these, which are, as it were, his rays, shine, he through whose proximity the body, the senses, the sensorium and the intellect are doing their work, as if ordered by him, he the ever conscious one, by whom all objects beginning from individuality and ending in the corporeal frame, as well pleasures and the rest, are known as a jar is known by us,—this Being in the inner Self the eternal Person, the ever blissful One, ever the same, pure knowledge, under whose impulse speech and the vital airs do their work." Sankara was too much absorbed in the metaphysical or natural attributes of God, namely, his knowledge, unity and infinitude, to pay proper attention to his moral attributes namely, his goodness, mercy, justice, holiness

and the like, and it will be presently seen that his conception of the relation of God to nature and humanity made him regard these latter attributes as, in a sense, only relatively and not absolutely true of the Supreme Being. However, the nice distinction he draws between these two classes of attributes being once admitted, he has no objection to speak of, and even to dwell upon the latter class of attributes as he does specially in his commentary on the *Bhagavadgita*, where he has many occasions to speak of them.

7 *God and Nature*—From the above statement of Sankara's idea of God, and his manner of proving the Divine existence it might be supposed, notwithstanding what we have said about his Idealism that according to him Nature is something distinct from God. But this would be a great mistake. The reason of his first drawing a distinction between subject and object, self and not self, God and Nature, is to show that the Ultimate Reality is an intelligent principle, a conscious Being, and not an unconscious substance or a blind power. His

next business is to show that this conscious, intelligent 'Being is necessarily infinite, all-comprehending, one without a second, and unchangeable. But as soon as he has done this he turns round and says that Nature, which seems to be the very opposite of God, which is finite, *i. e.*, in space, while God is infinite, beyond space, which is manifold and divisible while God is one and invisible, which is ever changing while God is unchangeable,—that this Nature is nothing but God himself. With regard to Nature and its relation to God, Sankara makes two apparently contradictory series of assertions. Of the proposition "Nature is nothing but God" he sometimes puts so great an emphasis on the term "nothing" that he is apt to be understood as meaning that Nature does not really exist, but only seems to do so, or that it is an evanescent thing existing this moment and perishing in the next and that God, the infinite, unchanging One, alone exists. But again he transfers his emphasis to the phrase "but God," and then he seems to mean that nature

is real, in fact as real as God, for it is God himself. The unreality attaches not to the *existence* of Nature, but to its separateness from God or rather to the belief that Nature is something distinct from God. On a close study of Sankara's theory of Nature, these two apparently contradictory modes of indicating the nature of the world seems quite reconcilable. The substance of Sankara's theory of Nature is as follows: Nature is relative to God. The object is relative to the subject. Take away Nature's relation to God, and it is nothing. Minds unenlightened by Revelation and not habituated to meditation, do not see this relativity of Nature,—do not see that in knowing Nature we really know God as the concrete Reality, Nature being only something in him, an adjunct, as it were, of him. They do not see this and hence take Nature as something absolute something concrete. This is a mistake. God is the only concrete, absolute Reality and Nature is but a name for the modes of his appearance or manifestation. These modes are various and ever changing.

He, however, who manifested himself in these various and ever changing modes, is not in himself various and changing. He is ever the same, and unchangeable. Hence, it must be concluded that the infinite self identical and unchangeable One has the power of manifesting himself in finite, various and changing modes, and as one's power is nothing distinct from him, about a part of his nature, this power of the eternal One is itself eternal. Though Sankara sees the inevitableness of this conclusion, and accepts it in unmistakeable terms [see, for instance, the above extract from the commentary on the *Vedanta Sustras*, and Sankara's commentary on the 2nd Brahmana of the 1st chapter of the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*] he saw and again shows great impatience with it. He sees that it apparently involves a contradiction. The power of the Infinite to manifest himself as finite, and that to himself because there is no other intelligence but himself he being the soul of all finite beings,—is a power which is if not actually self contradictory, absolutely inexplicable. It makes possible



what seems impossible. It is, as Vedāntists say, *aghatana ghatana patiḥ*. Hence Sankara describes it, or rather admits its indescribability, by a number of mutually contradictory epithets, as follows —

सद्रूपसद्रूपभयात्मिका न  
 भिन्नरूपभिन्नरूपभयात्मिका न ।  
 सद्रूपनद्रूपभयात्मिका न  
 सद्रूपतानिर्वचनीयस्या ॥

"It is neither real nor unreal, nor both. It is neither distinct (from God nor one (with him) nor both. It is neither corporeal, nor incorporeal, nor both. It is most wonderful, it is indescribable." Hence Sankara calls it *Māyā*, which means the power of producing unsubstantial appearances. As I have already said, he shows great impatience with it, and in framing his scheme of salvation and his method of spiritual culture, he completely ignores its existence except as something that stands in the way of our attaining *karuṇā*, detachment from Nature, or in other words, unity without difference, a condition which

if we emphasise Sankara's admission of the eternity of Nature, God himself may be said never to attain. However, I shall now make a few remarks on Sankara's distinction between *saguna* and *nirguna* Brahma, a distinction based on God's relation to *Mâyâ*. *Saguna* means 'with the *gunas* : *e*, *Sattva*, *Rajas* and *Tamas* the primary qualities or forms of Nature or *Mâyâ*. *Nirguna* means 'without the *gunas*, devoid of *Mâyâ*'. *Saguna Brahma* therefore means God as manifested in or as the world God as immanent in Nature, and *nirguna Brahma* God contemplated as devoid of or beyond Nature, God as transcendent. It is the same Being who is both *saguna* and *nirguna*, Brahma and Isvara, Brahma and Brahman. As Sankara says in his commentary on the *Aitareya Upanishad*, Chapter III 3 —

तस्मात्प्रज्ञानं ब्रह्म । तदेतत् प्रत्यस्तमित सर्वो-  
पाधिविशेष सन्निरञ्जनं निर्मल निष्क्रिय शान्त  
मेकमद्वयं निति सर्वविशेषापोऽसवेद्य सर्वशब्द-  
प्रत्ययागोचरं तदत्यन्तं विशुद्धं प्रज्ञोपाधिसम्भवेन

सर्वज्ञमीश्वरसंज्ञं भवति । सर्वसाधारणात्मा  
 कृतजगद्बीजं प्रवृत्तं कं नियन्तृत्वादन्तर्यामिसंज्ञं  
 भवति । तदेव जगद्बीजभूतं बुद्ध्यात्माभिमानं लक्षणं  
 हिरण्यकर्मसंज्ञं भवति । तदेवान्तर्यामिभूतं प्रथमं  
 शरीरोपाधिमद्विराट् प्रजापतिं संज्ञं भवति ।

"Therefore, Reason is Brahma That Being which is devoid of all defining qualities, which is truth, formless, spotless, inactive, tranquil, one, without a second, which is to be known as "not this"—as devoid of all limiting adjuncts,—which transcends all description and conception,—that Being is entitled Isvara, the all knowing, because of his relation to that most pure quality,—) knowledge This promulgator of the universal, undeveloped seed of the world is entitled the "indwelling One" because of his being the Ruler That same Being, as the seed of the world, is entitled Hiranyagarbha (Brahma) who identifies himself with the intellect The world soul, who is born of that seed as the first embodied being, is entitled Prajāpati."

it would be a mistake to suppose that,

according to Sankarā, God was once inactive and became active at a particular point of time, for he distinctly says (for instance in the commentary on the *Vedānta Sūtras*, II, 1 35) that the world has no beginning and that the creative power of God is co eternal with him. He indeed recognizes different cycles of creation, and describes the close of each cycle as a state of rest in which the world as an effect, does not exist but is merged in the Cause, but he represents these cycles as forming an infinite series. We have also seen that according to him, the world in its primal form as the unevolved seed of evolved existence forms the eternal object of the Divine knowledge, that knowledge including that of all the details of creation existence and dissolution. The distinction of *saguna* and *nirguna* Brahma, of active and inactive Brahma of Brahmā and Isvara, therefore is a purely logical and not a chronological distinction. The same Being is at one and the same time *nirguna* and *saguna* active and inactive accordingly as he is regarded from one or another standpoint. Regarded as beyond

time and space, as undifferentenced and unchangeable, as transcendent, he is *nirguna*, beyond the world, inactive, for actions implies change. Regarded as related to time and space as manifesting himself in various shapes and at different times, as immanent, he is *saguna*, i. e., in or related to the world, and active. Though recognizing both these aspects of the Divine Nature, Sankara, as we have already said, betrays much impatience with the latter, and represents it as quasi-unreal. He does not seem to have clearly seen that the relation of the Infinite One with the finite is, however inexplicable it may seem, as real as his infinitude. If the finite is no thing, independently of the Infinite, is not the Infinite, on the other hand, intelligible only in relation to the finite? The distinction of *saguna* and *nirguna*, therefore, is only a relative and not an absolute distinction. God's relation to "that most pure quality, knowledge," which makes him "Ivara, the all knowing" according to Sankara, is not a relation that takes place in time, but is an eternal relation. If, then, God is never

absolutely *nirguna*, on Sankara's own admission, the distinction he sometimes draws between such attributes of God as truth, knowledge (that form of it in which subject and object are not differentiated) and infinitude on the one hand,—attributes, which were afterwards called *svarupa lakshanas*, absolute attributes, and all knowingness, all-powerfulness, truthfulness, goodness, justice and the like, on the other hand,—attributes, which afterwards received the general name of *tatastha lakshanas*, relative attributes,—such a distinction, I say, is more verbal than real, since God's relation to *Mâyā* the principle of difference, that which makes the distinction of subject and object, finite and Infinite, God and man possible never ceases, and God never becomes absolutely *nirguna*.

8 *God and man*—Man according to Sankara, is the Divine Spirit as identified with a limited object. This identification takes place through *Mâyā*, which is, as we have already seen, nothing but the eternal power of God to differentiate himself, and hence the

identification of himself with a limited object must be attributed ultimately to God himself. This Sankara does not deny, but he holds that God, in thus identifying himself with a finite object, in thus becoming a man, does not cease to be God, and does not lose his divinity. In an inexplicable way, he, though remaining ever one, indivisible and infinite, produces the phenomenon of innumerable individual selves identifying themselves with different objects or groups of objects. The objects with which the self, as it is in man, identifies itself before it becomes conscious of its divinity, are five fold. In its most ignorant state, the self of man identifies itself with the corporeal frame which, in Vedantic language, is called the *annamayana kosha*, the sheath consisting of the essence of food. This and the other objects with which the self identifies itself, are called sheaths, because they hide the real nature of the self, just as a sheath, in which a sword is encased, keeps its real nature concealed from our view. The second sheath is called the *prāṇamaya*, vital. The self identifies itself, at a certain stage of its

progress, with the vital power typified by the act of breathing. Then comes the *manomaya*, the sensorial sheath, the series of fleeting sensations that constitute the changing aspect of our mental life, or rather the sensorial system that manifests itself in these phenomena. Next to it is the *vijñānamaya*, the conceptual frame, i. e., the system of ideas that make our intellectual life possible,—that enable us to attain fixed and definite knowledge of things. Even these may be contemplated, as they actually were by the Buddhists, in abstraction from the self-conscious and self-identical self which makes them possible. Then there is, lastly, the *anandamaya kośha*, the system of pleasant feelings aroused by beloved objects from the lowest to the highest. This also inasmuch as it is not the eternal joy of God's eternal self-realization, but a series of more or less transient emotions, is not the real self but a manifestation of its power. The real self is that self-conscious being for which these five classes of objects exist, which transcends them, and cannot, therefore, be identified



with them. They are finite, while it is infinite. The self seems to be finite only when you identify it with any of the five gross or fine frames through which it manifests itself. But this identification with a limited object is due to ignorance, and ceases on the attainment of true self knowledge. The attainment of this knowledge—living in the perpetual consciousness of unity with God,—is according to Sankara, salvation or liberation (*moksha*)—the highest object of human life.

Here we come to the most difficult but at the same time, the most important part of Sankara's teachings. We are to see whether Sankara's *moksha* is the self contradictory thing it has been represented to be—the liberation of a self that needs no liberation, since as divine, it was never bound, or that most dreadful of all conditions—the utter annihilation of individual existence, or whether it is something more rational and desirable. Here, as in his theory of the relation of God to Nature, Sankara involves himself in a difficulty by alternately emphasis-

ing one or the other aspect of the same truth, and for not seeing with perfect clearness that unity and difference are not mutually contradictory, but are really complementary moments of the same truth. When he insists upon the eternality of *moksha*, when he says that it already exists as the eternal nature of the Godhead, and is not a condition to be produced by individual effort, and that all that the individual has to do is to see that its own existence is the result of ignorance, he seems to mean that the highest goal of individual life is to get itself annihilated and let God shine alone, in his infinite majesty, as He has ever done. Such a view of liberation makes annihilation the final object of creation, and it seems that the world owes little to Sankara if his life-long labours were really directed to making it easy for us to attain such an object. It must be confessed that many passages of his writings seem to lend themselves to such an interpretation. But there are again other passages which admit of a different interpretation. In them he speaks of *moksha* as the

consciousness of the individual soul of its unity with God and exhorts us with all his characteristic earnestness to attain to such an exalted condition,—describing, with singular eloquence, its transcendent holiness and blissfulness. From such, it seems that Sankara's *moksha* is not a purely negative condition—that it is not the actual annihilation of the individual, but its freedom from *ahankāra*—from the ignorant assumption of its independent existence. This becomes more clear when we find Sankara now and again speaking of liberated souls in the plural number and describing them as working for the liberation of other souls, thus admitting their mutual exclusiveness and their distinction from the universal infinite Spirit. As we have seen that by admitting the existence of an eternal principle of differentiation Sankara commits himself to a sort of relative dualism in spite of his attempt to reduce the universe to an abstract unity. So here also we see that by admitting the distinction of the individual soul from the Universal—however relative that distinction

may be,—and holding that *moksha* consists in the individual's knowledge of its unity with the Universal, the great *advaita* teacher fails to reach an absolute Monism, and inevitably commits himself to a doctrine of eternal through relative distinction between the finite and the Infinite. For what can possibly be the meaning of the individual's knowledge of its unity with the Universal but the knowledge on the part of a being, distinguished in a sense from the Universal of its essential unity with the latter? This knowledge cannot be the knowledge of the Infinite itself of its own absolute unity, for this it possesses from eternity and is not something that can be even negatively dependent upon the negation or extinction of a finite object. If *moksha* meant this,—the Infinite's knowledge of itself then it would be more reasonable to describe it as the liberation of the Infinite than of the finite. But if *moksha* is a goal for the finite and not the Infinite, then it cannot possibly mean anything less than the conscious attainment on the part of a finite being of

its unity, in spirit, with the Infinite, or, from the standpoint of the Infinite the manifestation, on the part on the latter, of its spiritual unity with the finite. From whatever standpoint we look at it, an element of distinction is seen to be inevitably involved in it. The author of the *Vedanta Sūtras* admits this distinction in unmistakeable terms in some of his aphorisms. But according to Sankara's interpretation of these aphorisms, they treat of relative *moksha* only, of the soul's unity with Brahma or Hiranyagarbha. According to him there is a higher an absolute *moksha* the soul's absolute unity with Para Brahma, though the Sūtrakara is silent about it. What Sankara's idea of this absolute *moksha* is, is a most difficult thing to ascertain, as I have already remarked. As pointed out above, if liberation is not mere annihilation, and if it is not the eternal self realization of the Infinite itself, if it is something that depends on individual effort, and is a positive condition, then it necessarily implies an eternal distinction as well as onity between the finite and the Infinite. Now in what does this distinc-

tion consist? Wherein does it lie? It does not of course lie in the finite and the Infinite being mutually exclusive existences, for this excludes unity. It must be consistent with the absolute unity and indivisibility of consciousness. It can be due only to that principle of differentiation or distinction that we have seen to be an aspect of the Divine nature. It must consist in the individual's continuing to identify itself, in a sense, with a limited object even when it has known the Supreme Self as its real self. When can that object be? The *annamaya* and *pranamaya koshas* may be considered too gross to be perpetuated, the *manomaya* also, owing to its close relation to the objects of sense may be deemed incapable of persistence. But what of the two other sheaths,—the *vijnānamaya* and *ānandamaya*, the understanding and the emotions? Are they also, even when freed from ignorance and impurity, destroyed like all that is carnal and sensuous in us? If so, there remains nothing, no being to know and enjoy its unity with the Supreme, and *moksha* itself becomes unmeaning. Sankara, indeed, has the hardi-

hood to say that from the highest standpoint, there is neither bondage nor liberation. F

न निरोधो न चोत्पत्तिर्न बन्धो न च साधकः ।

न मुमुक्षु न वै मुक्त इत्येषा परमार्थता ॥

*Vicakṣurāmāṇi, 576*

"The highest truth is this that there is neither restraint nor production, neither bondage nor one who strives after liberation, neither one who desires liberation nor one who is liberated."

But as, notwithstanding this, we find him continually exhorting us to strive after liberation and dwelling upon its holiness and blissfulness, and as, in the very *śloka* following the above, he describes the *guru* as admonishing the disciple to preach the truths received by him to all who are desirous of attaining *nirvāṇa* and as himself moving about the world for making it holy, we need not take him at his word, but should rather understand Sankara as simply emphasising the aspect of unity in the Divine nature, and meaning nothing more than to say that nothing conditioned, whether it be bondage or liberation, the individual in

bondage or the individual as liberated, is real in itself, real absolutely, but is so only in relation to the Unconditioned, the Absolute. If then, liberation itself is not unreal, and if, as Sankara says, "it is obtained whenever freedom from ignorance, the knot of the understanding, is obtained,"

अविद्याहृदयग्रन्थिमोक्षो मोक्षो यतस्तत् ।

*Verse 560*

Then the *viśṇānamaya* and *anandamaya* *loshas*, the understanding and the emotions, if nothing else, must be admitted as persisting in the individual even when it attains *moksha*. *Moksha* would then consist in the individual understanding's seeing the truth that the consciousness manifested in itself, in its ideas, is the infinite consciousness itself, and not a infinite separate consciousness, as is imagined in its state of bondage. The realisation, on the part of the finite understanding, of its unity of consciousness with the Infinite, would undoubtedly be, as Sankara is never tired of saying, a state of the highest bliss. But nevertheless, this realization im-



plies, on the other hand, as its very condition, the individual's consciousness of an irresolvable distinction, as a system of *particular* ideas and emotions, from the infinite, in which *all* ideas and emotions, including its own, are comprehended

This conclusion is, as I have already hinted, an implication from Sankara's doctrine of *moksha* rather than something which he clearly admits. As I remarked in dealing with his theory of Nature, Sankara's soul is irresistibly bent upon attaining *kaivalya*, which may be described as "unity without difference," and any doctrine that offers an obstacle to its attainment, whether it be the existence of an eternal principle of difference in the Divine nature, or the eternal distinction of the Infinite and the finite, is, even though it is logically involved in his teachings, admitted by him with apparent reluctance, and only in an indirect manner.

Sankara rightly describes conscious unity with God as a state of transcendent holiness. It may be shown to demonstration that all unholiness is due to *ahankāra*, the ignorant

assumption of one' independent existence—existence independent of the all comprehending universal Soul, and that the consciousness of one's unity with the Universal is the condition of attaining perfect holiness. In this respect Sankara's teachings are at one with the best teachings of the present age, and in so far as he says this we may follow his lead without hesitation. But when we see that in applying this highest principle of ethical and spiritual life to the details of human conduct, he is satisfied with what may be called a merely subjective holiness,—only with a few details of the devotional aspect of life, and treats with apparent indifference its domestic, social and political aspects, we are inclined to remind him that since, on his own admission, the whole universe is Brahman, unity with him cannot consist in the reduction of ourselves to a blank unity without difference, it consists rather in the conscious and ever-developing, ever deepening identification of our lives with the life of the universe in all its varied aspects

---

## ATMA BODHA OR KNOWLEDGE OF SPIRIT.

1. This book on knowledge of spirit is composed for those who have already effaced their sins by patience, have attained tranquility, have conquered passion and who are aspiring to final emancipation.

2. Of all means knowledge alone is able to effect emancipation; as without fire there can be no cooking, so without *Jñāna*, science, there can be no final deliverance.

3. Action has no power of repelling ignorance; but by science it is dispersed, as darkness is dispersed by light.

4. The spirit is smothered, as it were, by ignorance, but so soon as ignorance is destroyed, spirit shines forth, like the sun when released from clouds.

5. After the soul, afflicted by ignorance, has been purified by science, science disappears, as the seed or berry of the *Kataka* after it has purified water.

6. Like an image in a dream the world is troubled by love, hatred, and other poisons.

as incessantly superintending their operations as a king (watches over his ministers).

18. Whilst the organs of sense are in action it appears to the ignorant that it is spirit which acts, as when clouds pass across the Moon, the moon itself appears to move.

19. The body, the organs of sense, *manas* and *buddhi*, accomplish their respective functions, under the influence of spirit, as men accomplish their affairs (by the light of the sun). '

20. It is from want of discernment that qualities or acts of the body and the organs of sense are attributed to the pure, living, intelligent spirit, as the colour blue and other properties are attributed to the firmament.

21. Action and other faculties which belong to *manas* are attributed to spirit through ignorance, as one attributes the agitation of waves in water to the Moon whose image they reflect.

22. Passion, desire, pleasure, pain dwell in *buddhi*, wherever *buddhi* really exists; when in a state of deep slumber *buddhi* ceases to exist, they likewise are no more.

23. 'As light is the peculiar property of the Sun, freshness of water, heat of fire, so according to its nature, Spirit is essentially life, intelligence, beauty, eternity, purity.

24. The living and intelligent character of spirit (*atman*), and the activity of intelligence (*buddhi*) are distinct; when they are identified by ignorance, one says "I know."

25. Spirit cannot change, *buddhi*, intelligence, has no *bodha* knowledge; the soul (*Jiva*) knowing things in excess is subject to illusion, and says, I act, I see.

26. If spirit falls into the errors of supposing the individual soul, *Jiva*, to be itself, as one might suppose a rope to be a snake it becomes frightened; but so soon as it perceives I am not *Jiva* but the Supreme Spirit (*paramatam*), it is released from all fear.

27. Spirit makes *buddhi* &c., and the organs of sense manifest, as a lamp illuminates a vase and other objects; but spirit which is Spirit (*svatman*) is not illuminated by inert matters.

28. Spirit, whose special property is

knowledge, does not require knowledge about itself from any other, as a lamp, shining with light of its own, does not require another lamp to make visible.

20 If once the *upadhi*, or attributes, are put aside by saying, "This is not, this is not" let the identity of the Supreme Spirit with soul be recognised by means of the sacred sentences.

30. All that belongs to the body (must be considered) as the product of ignorance. It is visible; it is, perishable as bubbles of air (on the surface of water); but that which has not these signs must be recognised as pure Spirit which says of itself, 'I am Brahma.

31. Because, I am distinct from body, I experience neither birth, old age, decrepitude, nor extinction, and detached from organs of sense, I have no longer any connection with their objects, such as sound.

32 Being deprived of *manas* I no longer feel grief, passion, hatred, fear, or other affections. I am;—and this is established by

revelation (*srutis*), I am without breathing without *mañas*, absolutely pure.

33. From Brahma proceed, or are born the breath of life (*prana*), *manas*, the organs of sense, the air, the wind, light, water, and the earth, which nourish all existence.

34. I am without quality, without activity, eternal, without volition, without soil, without change, without form, emancipated for ever, perfectly pure.

35. I am like the ether, penetrating all things within and without, I am without defect, the same throughout; pure, impassable, immaculate, immoveable.

36. That which is eternal, pure, free, one happy, without duality, and truly existing—that which is knowledge, infinite, and the Supreme Brahma, that I am.

37. This conception, 'I am Brahma himself, incessantly entertained, disperses the hallucinations born of ignorance, as medicine disperses sickness.

38. Seated in a desert place, exempt from passion, master of his senses, let man

represent to himself this spirit, one and infinite, without allowing his thoughts to stray elsewhere.,

39. Considering the visible universe as annihilated in spirit, let a man, pure through intelligence, constantly contemplate the One Spirit, as he might contemplate luminous ether.

40. Knowing the highest, he rejects all else, and remains firmly united with the self-existent Being, who is perfect, intelligent and happy.

41. In the Supreme Spirit there is no distinction between the perceiver, perception, and the object perceived. In this quality of the Being, which is one, intelligent and happy, he shines by self-illumination.

42. When meditation rubs diligently against spirit, the flame, which such friction produces, burns up all the combustible materials of ignorance.

43. When knowledge disperses darkness, the light of the spirit shines forth, dazzling as the sun.

44. Spirit, always accessible, is rendered



apparently, inaccessible by ignorance, but ignorance being dissipated, spirit shines forth, and is again accessible, like the jewels around the neck (of a person who had forgotten them).

45. It is an error to attribute the spirit of life (or man's individual spirit (*Jivita*), to the Supreme Spirit, just as it is an error to take a post for a man. When once the true nature of *Jivita* has been recognised *Jivita* itself disappears.

46. The knowledge which comes from comprehending that Being, which has self existence, completely destroys the ignorance, which says 'I am' or 'That belongs to me,' in the same manner as the light of the sun dissipates uncertainty concerning the regions of the sky.

47. The Yogin, possessing perfect discernment, contemplates all things as subsisting in himself, and thus, by the eye of knowledge, discovers that all is the one Spirit.

48. He knows that all this moveable world is Spirit or that beyond Spirit there

is nothing; as all varieties of vase are clay, so all things he sees are spirit.

49. He, who emancipated from his own individual attributes (*Jivaumukta*) knows this, rejects the qualities of the attributes he previously believed himself to possess, and becomes (*Brahma*) in virtue of the essential nature of that Being, intelligent and happy, just as the chrysalis loses its former nature to become a bee.

50. After having traversed the ocean of illusion, and after having destroyed the bad genius with which it is infested, the Yogin sinks into tranquillity, his spirit filled with joy.

51. Renouncing attachment for external and changeable happiness, and satisfied with happiness derived from spirit (*atman*), he shines with inward light, as a lamp sheltered beneath a glass.

52. The Muni (or Yogin), although subject to the conditions of the body, resembles the ether in not being soiled by their properties. Knowing every thing, he conducts him-

self as though he knows nothing and passes on like the wind, detached from all things

53. From the moment in which the attributes (*Upadhi*) are destroyed the Muni enters immediately into that which penetrates everywhere (*Vishnu*), as water in water, air in air, fire in fire

54 The possession possessing which there is no other to desire, the happiness above which there is no higher happiness, the science above which there is no higher science, may one know that this is Brahma ?

55 The object of vision, beyond which no further vision can be desired, the existence in union with which no further birth is possible, the knowledge beyond which one needs no further knowledge,—may one know it,—it is Brahma !

56 The being which fills all intermediate regions, superior and inferior, living, intelligent, happy, without duality, infinite, eternal one—may one know it,—it is Brahma !

57 ' That which is designated in the books of the Vedanta as the existence which rejects all which is not Him, the imperishable,

the incessantly happy, the one,—may one know it,—it is Brahma !

58. : Admitted to a portion of the happiness of that Being, which is incessantly happy, Brahma and the other gods attain a partial happiness.

59. All things rest upon Him, all activity depends upon Him, there Brahma is universally diffused, like butter in the mass of milk.

60 That which is neither small, nor large, neither short, nor long, neither subject to birth nor destruction, that which is without form, without qualities, without colour, without name,—may one know it—it is Brahma !

61 That by the splendour of which the sun and the star shine, whilst itself it derives no light from their light, that by which all things are illuminated,—may one know it,—it is Brahma !

62 Penetrating everywhere, within, without, illuminating the whole universe, Brahma shines from afar, like a globe of iron rendered incandescent by flame.

63. Brahma has no resemblance to the world ; nothing in reality exists but Brahma, if anything is produced which is exterior to him, it is but a vain show, like the mirage of the desert.

64. All that is seen, all that is heard, is Brahma and by knowing this, Brahma, is contemplated as the existing intelligent, undivided Being.

65. The eye of science contemplates the Being which is living, intelligent, happy which penetrates throughout ; but the eye of ignorance cannot contemplate this, an as person who is blind cannot perceive the shining sun.

66. The *Jiva* or soul enlightened by sacred tradition and other means of knowledge, warmed by the fire of knowledge, and freed from all soil, becomes brilliant as gold purified by fire.

67. When *atman*, spirit, which is the sun of knowledge, rises in the ether of the heart, disperses darkness, permeates all and sustains all ; it shines, and all is light.

68. He who undertakes the pilgrimage of the spirit, which is peculiar to himself,

## A NOTE ON SANKARA'S AGE

BY

H. H. WILSON.

---

The birth of Sankara presents the same discordance of opinion as every other remarkable incident amongst the Hindus.

The Kadali Brahmans, who form an establishment following and teaching his system, assert his appearance about 2000 years since, some accounts place him about the beginning of the Christian era, other in the third or fourth century after; a manuscript history of the king of Konga, in Colonel Makenzie's collections, makes him contemporary with Tiru Vikrama Deva Chatravarty, sovereign of Skandapura in the Dekhan, A. D. 178, at Sringagiri, on the edge of the Western Ghats and now in the Mysore territory, at which place he is said to have founded a college that still exists, and assumes the supreme control of the Smarta Brahmans of the Peninsula, an antiquity of 1600 years is attributed to him, and common tradition makes him, about

1200 years old. The *Bhojā Prabanda* enumerates Saakara amongst its worthies, and as contemporary with that prince; his antiquity will then be between eight and nine centuries. The followers of Mādhvāchārya in Tuluva seem to have attempted to reconcile these contradictory accounts by supposing him to have been born three times; first at Sivuli, in Tuluva about fifteen years ago, again in Malabar some centuries later, and, finally at Pādukachaytra in Tuluva no more than 600 years since; the latter assertion being introduced evidently to do honor to their own founder, whose date that was, by enabling him to triumph over Sankara in a suppositious controversy. The Vaishṇava Brahmanas of Madura say that Sankara appeared in the ninth century of Sālivāna or tenth of our era; Dr. Taylor thinks that, if we allow him about 900 years, we shall not be far from the truth, and Mr. Colebrooke is inclined to give him an antiquity of about 1500 years. This last is the age which my friend Rammohan Roy, a diligent student of Sankara's works, and philosophical teacher of his

doctrines, is disposed to concur in, and he infers that "from a calculation of the spiritual generations of the followers of the Sankara Swāmi from his time up to this date he seems to have lived between the seventh and eighth centuries of the Christian era,"—a distance of time agreeing with the statements made to Dr Buchanan is his journey through Sankara's native country, Malabar, and in union with the assertion of the Kerala Utpatti, a work giving an historical and statistical account of the same province, and which, according to Mr Duncan's citation of it, mentions the regulations of the castes of the Malabar by this philosopher to have been affected about 1000 years before 1798. At the same time it must be observed that a manuscript translation of the same work, in Colonel Mackenzie's possession, states Sankara Achārya to have been born about the middle of the fifth century, or between thirteen and fourteen hundred years ago, differing in this respect from Mr Duncan's statement, a difference of less importance, as the manuscript in question, either from defects in the



the reformation or re-establishment of the fourth religious order. It is therefore probable that the Brahmans enjoyed the ascendancy in his time, and that the violent suppression of any powerful sect had considerably preceded the appearance of his peaceable system of worldly privation and abstract devotion.

Many works, in celebration of this distinguished character, and in commemoration of his triumph over the errors of all other systems of theology, have been composed, entitled *Sankara-vijaya*, or *Sankara-jaya*; they profess to narrate the most remarkable incidents of the reformer's life, and the different disputes held by him with his principal opponents. One of these I have examined: it is the work of Madhava, a commentation on the Vedas agreeably to the Vedānta notions, and a writer of great celebrity. He is known to have lived about the year 1300, by his making mention of Sangama, the father of Bukha Rāya and Harihara, the founders of Vijayānagara. According to his own statement, his work is but the substance of a much

older performance, and he speaks of Sankara as being celebrated by all the ancient writers confirming therefore at the least the antiquity I have above assigned to that theologian

As far as the Sankara Vijaya of Madhava can be admitted as an authority, and it is much too poetical and legendary to be so acknowledged without very great limitation, we may draw the same conclusion that is to be inferred from Sankara's own expositions, that it is a popular error to ascribe to him the work of persecution, he does not appear at all occupied in that odious task, nor is he engaged in particular controversy with any of the Bauddhas, the more prominent objects of his opposition are the Mimāṃsakas as represented by Mandana Miśra, with whom he holds a long and rather acrimonious discussion, and the Naiyāyikas and Sāṅkhyas and the vulgar sects of Vaiśhāṇavas and Śhaivīs, are alike the objects of his position

He comes in a personal contact with the Bauddhas, indeed, according to our authority, in but two instances, the first is a short conference with an Arhata, who advocates the

Madhyamika doctrines or those of a Bauddha sect, and which is held in the Bahlika country a region identified by name and geographical position with the modern Balkh, and the second happens in Kasmir, where amongst the many sects who oppose Sankara's access to the temple of Saraswati, a short time before his death, the Bauddhis make their appearance. Besides the positive conclusion presented by those circumstances that Sankara was not engaged actively in any personal conflict with the followers of Bauddha scheme, we derive from them a very probable conjecture as to the situation of the Bauddhas in the time at which Madhava flourished, and as he places them no nearer than in Kashmir and Khorasan it appears likely that some period prior to his date was the epoch at which Baoudha faith was compelled to retire from its native seats towards those northern regions in which it still prevails.

The persecution of the Bauddhas is ascribed by Madhava, to another reformer, Kumarila Bhattacharya, the predecessor of Sankara. According to our author Kumarila Bhattacharya

was an incarnation of Kartikeya, the object of whose descent was the extirpation of the Saugatas and in consequence of whose miraculous victory over his heretical antagonists, the Prince Sudhanwa—issued the fatal orders to that effect

The king thus commanded his attendants  
*‘let those who slay not be slain, the old man amongst the Bauddhas and the babe from the bridge of Rāma to the snowy mountains’*

The priority of the Bauddha persecution by Kumarila Bhatta to the age of Sankara is further corroborated by the manuscript account of Malabar, the Kerala Utpatti, which I have already adverted to. According to this authority, the establishment of this teacher in Malabar, local testimonies of which, it is said, existed when the work was written, took place about a century before the birth of Sankara, and occasioned the entire expulsion of the Bauddhanmar or Bauddhas from the kingdom and we find on that side of India other accounts confirming this fact, and that the Brahmans of Tuluva who were originally followers of Bhatta Acharya, the same with

Kumarila Bhatta, assert his having had great success against the heretical sects some time before Sankara, who is presented as having disputed with, and converted the followers of Bhatta's particular doctrine.

As the Bauddha sect, according to Madhava, was annihilated by Kumarila Bhatta, it would have been a work of supererogation to commit the same task to Sankara and we have therefore further reason to doubt his ever having engaged in it at all, much more his having been the author and chief agent of the persecution. As, indeed, his *reform is rather addressed to the admitted system of theology than to those considered heterodox*, we must conclude that these latter had really suffered some temporary or partial discomfiture so long prior to the age of Sankarachārya, as to have left time for the introduction and diffusion of various attempts towards the reformation of the orthodox faith.

According to the authority of Madhava and that of tradition, Kumarila Bhatta committed himself to the flames in the presence

of Sankara Acharya: they will consequently be regarded as contemporary. We need not however lay much stress on these accounts, especially as Vyasa and Jaimini, nay even Agastya, are all manifest personally to our reformer, if we are to give credit to our guide, and as, according to other authorities, Kumarila Bhatta was the pupil of Jaimini, the founder of the Mimāṃsa school of philosophy, who, there is a reason to suppose, is much more ancient. We can only therefore conclude generally that the triumph of Kumarila Bhatta and the persecution of the Bauddhas took place at some period anterior to the age of Sankara and before the eighth century.

---